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SWORDS FOR LIFE

de Selincourt, Irene Rutherford (Mc Leod)

SWORDS FOR LIFE

BY

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DEDICATED TO

MY MOTHER

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PEOPLE TO POETS

Arise, O ye singers of life!
Gird up your faith for the fight!
Now is the bitterest strife,
Between darkness and light!
Now is the cry going forth,
Hope and despair in its breath,
Yours is the battle of worth,
Life against Death!

Yours not to falter and shrink!
Yours not to shelter away!
Unto you it was given to drink
Of the waters of day!
But ye builded your cities of dreams
Too fair, and too frail, and too high:
The blood of humanity streams!
We wither! we die!

Establish your heaven on earth,
O ye who have life in your hands!
Quicken our seed for new birth!
Water our lands!
Famine and drought have us bound,
We have drained the last dregs of the cup!
Feed us and cherish our wound!
The cry goeth up!

Grief hath so swollen our eyes
With passion and tears, we are blind!
We grope for the good and the wise!
We would follow behind!
O sit not and weep for our tears
Lest ye too be prisoned in night,
Share not our pains and our fears —
Fight the good fight!

Unto whom shall we turn in our need
If your banner of light fall and trail

In the dust with our own? Who shall lead
If ye falter and fail?
But Death shall be scattered away
When Love brings his sword to the strife!
Lead us out, lead us out into day!
An army for Life!

UNFOLDING

I HAVE strange songs in me, my friend of friends,
Music, but all unmeaning, severed, wild,
Not crystallised in harmony, it lends
No peace to pain, and I am like a child
Groping in unfamiliar passages. . . . O, come!
Come! Kindle this chaos to creation's power!
You can, if you will stay with me . . . and dumb,
Close, still. . . . Listen! . . . the unfolding of a flower,
Petal for petal . . . hush you. . . . What does it say?
This rose is in my soul, you, only you,
Can hold the noises of the world away,
Can teach me that the truth of it is true.

IN THE MIRROR

Now before the glass I stand
With my chin cupped in my hand,
Wondering if I see my face
As others see it, whether grace
Is found by other eyes than mine
Whose grey reflections scornful shine.
Once, long ago, a grave-eyed child
Whose moon-pale face shone cold and wild
Between the dim straight falls of hair
Stood here, and challenged God to dare
Let her live on, and not be sweet,
And red and white, with dancing feet
Like all the others: she said . . . "They lie
Who call Thee good! O, let me die!
No! Change me now, and after
Ten years weeping
Give me laughter!

Touch my face
With heavenly grace!
While I'm sleeping
With Thy magic finger trace
Rosy lips and dimples peeping!
Steep my eyes
In the blue of Paradise,
And there
Drown two stars from windy skies,
And shake their gold dust in my hair!
O, after
Ten years weeping
Give me laughter!"

Again before the glass I stand
With my chin cupped in my hand
As then, to ask God how He dare
Let me live on and not be fair.
Not for you, O mirrored eyes,
The melting blue of Paradise!
Not for you, O heavy brow,
The crown of joy, crown shattered now,

And lost in dust. O, folded lips,
Down from your touch the joy cup slips. . . .
Locked gates that hold the surging swell
Of voiceless hate, while worms of hell
Consume the heart. . . . O, tragic youth!
O, sad pursuit of sadder truth!
O, young cold face, these shadows grey
Lie dimly there, stealing away
Youth's right of loveliness! O, tears
In secret shed through all the years!
O God, grant this, that after
These years of weeping,
Void of laughter,
Brimmed with pain,
My soul's the gain!
That in me, sleeping,
Flowers of thought that spring from rain
Of tears grow fruitful for my reaping!
Then shall my eyes
Pierce the mists of Paradise
And there

My soul, wringing eternities,
At last, at last shall greatly dare,
Shall bring Thee, after
Long years weeping,
Laughter! Laughter!

AWAKENING

I HAVE been young, and wise, and very sane;
I have been wiser than uncareful age
Whose wisdom has known folly; I have trod
Fearfully in the roses, and no stain
Has blotted my wan youth's fastidious page;
I dared not tilt at windmills for my God,

Until, blamelessly walking my unsmiling way,
I stumbled on a pale hand at my feet,
Thrust from the dark unconquered wilderness,
And lo, out of the innocent grasses where it lay
There sprang red flowers, passionately sweet,
Which, leaning to me, crimsoned my white dress.

Now all is gone, all the old little things,
The little paths, the little bolted door,
The little tame birds singing little songs.

All is a little dream . . . now wildest wings
Flame the indifferent air, and soar
Beyond men's farthest visions, rights, and wrongs.

Now all my wisdom drops away with tears,
Low kneeling in the dust I pluck these flowers,
Then fling my body on the front of thorn
Hedging your need from me: O, all the years
Are nothing, childhood is dead, mine are new
powers,
New songs, new stars! By you I am new born.

I REMEMBER A GUSTY NIGHT

I REMEMBER a gusty night, and a hill we climbed, singing,
I remember the lash of grass, and grey moths winging,
Smell of earth, smell of sea, smell of flowers growing,
And a break in the clouds in the windy west, with one star showing.

All of the world was left behind in the dim dark under,
The only word of the world's pain was the sea's far thunder,
Men's blood, men's tears, men's cruel laughter
Were smothered close in the placid depths, and could not follow after.

I remember a prayer we prayed in the wild windy
weather,
I remember a vow we vowed, heart and heart to-
gether,
Love's faith, love's strength, love's truth to bind
us,
All of the loveless bonds of men we broke and left
behind us.

Although we walk in the world's ways and the
world's ways sever,
Though living sap our life's blood, and dreams be
lost endeavour,
Though small sins and sad shames swing up the
scales in sorrow,
That infinite short hour shall last to-morrow and
to-morrow!

LIVED

Yesterday we stood together
In wild and windy weather,
We were happy in high places,
In infinite blue spaces —
Together.

Yesterday our lips were meeting,
Heart on glad heart beating,
We dreamed no possible division,
Young eyes in mutual vision,
Meeting.

We had left the world behind us,
No trivial thing might find us,
All we asked of life was given,
All but wind and heaven
Behind us!

Now lie we separately, weeping,
In lonely Memory's keeping,
Sad with imperishable sweetness,
Comfortless in completeness,
Weeping!

WINTER

Summer, alas, is fled,
She is dead.
Autumn has kissed her eyes
With cold sighs
And the hushed leaves fall
Over all.
Hear the lame padded beat
Of Winter's feet.
Hush, he is stalking on,
Lean and wan.
He counts his destined dead
With wagging head.
Now his stark lips unfold
For the old,
Now his pale hideous tongue
Licks up the young.

Famine steps after him,
  Dumb and grim.
Hush, they lie down with Death,
  And their breath
Mingles and puffs in one
  To hide the sun.
Hush, hand in hand they go,
  Soft and slow,
Gathering their harvest in,
  Bodies and sin.

THE END

Once I strayed in a dream
Out of the track
Which sorrowful feet
For sorrow trod,
For sorrow beat.
I dropped my pack,
I followed a gleam
For a smile of God.

When at last I awoke
From sorrow's sleep,
One leaned above
Compassionately.
His look was love
That pierced me deep,
He never spoke,
But smiled on me.

When night came down like a fold,
Our peace to cover,
He was not gone.
Wrapped round with light
I was at one
With my holy lover. . . .
Now I lie cold
In the cold night.

Dawn comes drab in the east,
I have lost my way.
Light comes dead
In the grey wind,
And wherever I tread,
Night or day,
With plaint unceas't
One walks behind.

His footsteps haunt my ears
In monotone.
His eyes like fate

Haunt my desires.
Him I hate:
I would be alone
With my own tears,
And my dead fires.

This is the corpse of Him
Of the shining hours,
Which lightless stands
With blank face,
In Its hands
Withered flowers,
Scentless and dim,
From the holy place.

WEAKNESS

I AM tired, tired, tired: swiftly, surely over my head
The bitter waters are closing, and I know that I am dead,
Dead the hope, dead the fear, dead the soul of me;
I am done with the fighting now, I am done with the will to be.

I am too tired for the comfort of tears, no more I feel the knife
Twisting keen in a pulsing heart . . . that was a thing of life!
All that lives in me now, I know, is the little noise of my breath.
I am too tired for living on, too tired for the pain of death.

Sea may not come in forever against land, I have
struggled long,
I am weary of standing against the tide, weary of
being strong;
Let me sleep a little, somewhere hidden in gloom,
To dream of a presence . . . a step . . . a voice
. . . and the deep blue peace of a room.

DESPAIR

My courage tires,
Low burn the fires
Of hope, of youth,
Of zest for truth
For truth is pain,
And I am fain
For peace, and rest,
Within my breast.
O, I am worn,
Diversely torn
By fear and strength,
Till now at length
My dread is sore,
I can no more.
O ruthless wind,
Thou art unkind,
And yet, and yet,

I now forget
Thy buffeting
And bitter sting.
I feel thee not,
Thou art forgot,
Too dull am I
To heed thy cry,
Too sunk in gloom.
I have no room
For any thought.
My battle's fought,
My die is tossed,
And lost, lost, lost.
The poplars sough,
And swish, and bow
Before the breath
Of windy death.
Down swills the rain
In gusts of pain,
And footsteps pass
In the sodden grass.

To and fro
All night they go,
To and fro
In hurried woe,
I hear the beat
Of muffled feet;
The feet of the dead
Tramp my head,
In merciless drone,
In monotone,
Sad and dull,
With never a lull . . .
And I sit here,
With never a tear,
Too dead to hate,
Or curse my fate,
Or wail my doom,
I sit in gloom:
I am grown old,
I am grown cold.

Ghost hands hold up
My bitter cup!
It is on my lips:
Nor slips! Nor slips!

GREEN PLACES

I SEEK Thy greener solitudes,
The echoes of my footsteps in paved streets
Haunt me, and all these weary multitudes
Press on me, crying out their small defeats.

The pain of humans burns and aches
In me; I have a longing for dumb cows
Munching in peace by little placid lakes
Where dragon-flies monotonously drowse.

How green Thy lovely pasture lies!
I would put down my face in dewy grass
And hide me from the misery of eyes
Which stab my furtive spirit as they pass!

HALF-TRUTHS

Too often pride is vanity misnamed,
And freedom is but license unashamed,
Beauty's a mirage, truth's a lovely lie,
Faith's an old crutch we hobble lamely by,
Love's a false glass in which ourselves appear,
Fear suckles hope, and hope is blinded fear,
Humility's the vainest kind of pride
Dispraising self, yet fain to be denied:
And all these shams we passionately believe!
O God of Truth, how we ourselves deceive!

RESOLUTION

Morning creeps round, another day,
Windy and damp, and softly grey;
Dreams lie like weights about my head,
Chaining a willing slave to bed.
Another day, another round,
My feet to tread the beaten ground
Of days, and weeks, and many years,
A circling track marked out with tears;
But all my love, and all my will
Is bent to circle wider still,
To reach the utter bounds of earth,
And give my spirit newer birth,
To keep my eager soul afire,
To shun content, still to aspire;
And when my vision falls to dust
Because I seek with human lust

To grasp a star, let dust be mixed
With tears for marble! Vision fixed
In living art! O, I must live
To shape, to build, to sing, to give!
Thus think I as another day,
Windy and damp and softly grey,
Comes creeping to my window-pane
And bids me take the yoke again.

TO MY FRIEND

When memory, and grief, and fear
Assail my heart with bitter stress,
I am not afraid to come
Begging here,
Seeking, for love and quietness,
Your heart, my home.

I am not afraid to take
Peace, and strength, and kindling fire,
I am not afraid to ask,
For love's sake,
The utmost need of my desire,
The highest task.

Were I less proud I could not speak
Thus simply all my need of you;

Less strong, my heart could not confess
Its mood is weak.
I could not come were love less true
For quietness.

SONG

O WIND from the sea! O wind from the sea!
Blow gustily
Lustily
Over the sea!
With thy blast of thunder
O tear me asunder!
Annihilate me!
O scatter my dust,
My mud, and my rust!
Mustily,
Fustily,
Blind and a-blunder,
So have I lived, but at last I'll be free!
No longer a slave, I'll laugh, I'll rave,
Rearing,
Sheering,
With foam on the wave!

With the elements blending,
Life without ending!
O happy! O brave!
O loving and keen!
O mightily clean!
Careering,
Unfearing!
O wind! O water! No death! No grave!

YOUTH

Down the valleys and up the hill
Comes youth with wind behind him!
O, in his hands are daffodils,
And never a bond shall bind him!

Beneath the blessing of his feet
The young green corn is singing.
O, April rain is warm and sweet,
And all the earth is springing!

The star of the dawn is in his hair,
His lightning eyes are tearless.
O, every venture he will dare,
And his rebel heart is fearless!

His lovely lips are pitiless,
He spurns the old before him;

O, they vainly clutch at his passing dress,
And curse him and adore him!

He walks unshamed and unafraid,
And wind is ever behind him!
O, at his side is a burning blade,
And never a bond shall bind him!

For A. de S.

LOVE IN THE PINEWOOD

Where we lie under the trees,
There is peace at the heart of things,
And in our hearts there is love.
Among the pines wind moves and sings,
And stars like heavenly honey bees
Swarm in the boughs above.

O none may enter here
Save those whose hearts are true,
Who bear the light within,
Whose faith is strong to hold — to do,
Whose passion thinks no shame, no fear,
Or any tripping sin.

This is Love's holy place
Where all true lovers pray
To be stripped clean of doubt.

Now you and I must tear away
The masks that hide our spirit's face;
Let honesty shine out.

Now open all your doors
And let me come inside
To your heart's deepest shrine.
There would I come and there abide,
Treading those hospitable floors,
While you make free of mine.

Is there a hidden room
Where sorrow hides her tears,
Enthroned, and blind, and dumb?
I come, usurping, down the years
To oust her, where she sits in gloom,
Unthroning her I come!

Is there some chained wild hate
Wielding a rusty sword,
Unknowing what to smite?

To him I speak Love's burning word,
Point him a star to win from fate,
Weapon him with Love's might.

Is there a starved joy here,
A starved joy craving food?
By me his strength shall grow!
I'll suckle him with my heart's blood,
My deepest founts alive and clear
For him shall spring and flow!

Open your doors to me,
O heart that is my home!
Love's messenger am I!
For Love's proud sake the world I roam,
And I go lame — but Love goes free!
And Love! Love! Love! I cry!

Where we lie under the trees
There is peace at the heart of things,
And in our hearts there is love.

Among the pines wind moves and sings,
And stars, like heavenly honey bees,
Swarm in the boughs above.

O WORLD OF BEAUTY

O WORLD of beauty, hear my song!
I sing because my heart is strong,
And soars upon the billowing wind,
And shouts, and will not lag behind
Earth's stormy rhythm! I stand high
On this green wind-blown hill, and cry
My love song to this world I love!
Earth at my feet, and sky above!
Ploughed field, and trackless sea, and town —
O wind, you shall not roar me down!
I am a lover! I am grown
Great to contain you! I, alone,
Hold in my spirit all I see,
And feel, and hear! All this is me,
And I am one with all! O trees,
Like giants bowed to bend wild knees
To powers they, shrieking, still defy!

O mighty, laughter-driven clouds,
Like thoughts of gods, dark windy shrouds
Of dying light! O smoking sun,
By whom green earth was first begun,
Your flame-begotten child! O light
Chased by the first swift hounds of night
Across the glimmering fields! O note
Piped from a last drowsed blackbird's throat
Against the wind! O first green leaf
And flower of Spring's young dancing sheaf
Of joy! O laughing push of Spring
Against my heart! I sing, I sing
On this green hill my song of love!
O you are mine! In me you move,
And have undying life . . . for lo,
I have been touched by God! I know!

For H. de S.

I KNOW WHEN YOU ARE COMING

I KNOW when you are coming
  Wherever you may be,
For a deep note is humming,
  Ringing, and singing
You're on your way to me!

Until as you come near me
  It swells so loud and strong
The casual world must hear me,
  Ringing, and singing
All of me in song!

O I am poised for flying
  When I see you lean above,
And suns and moons are crying,
  Ringing, and singing
The holy praise of Love!

PAUSE

Beloved, do not move,
Keep still, keep still,
Lest the spell break.
O, let me drink my fill
From your deep eyes that brood on me above
Before I wake.

O, do not press more near,
A touch, a kiss
Would come between.
Never more close than this,
Our separate spirits, naked, burning clear,
Have we two been.

Only your brooding eyes
Are holding me,
And your loved face

Looks now immortally,
Your guardian thoughts my stumbling quest surprise
In unknown space.

So in the common maze
Of trivial things
Sometimes I find,
Peering from folded wings,
The moveless wisdom of your spirit's gaze,
Passionate and kind.

HARVEST

Love gave me grace to love you, and to sing.
These are my songs; O, take them royally,
Thank me no more than any other king
Thanks his own fields for harvest. You crown me
In reaping me of song. O, let me bring
Love's praise, as children to a guardian knee
Bring prayers, and bless by worshipping.
Your smiles and tears my highest thanks shall be.
Less praise of you than praise of Love there is:
But you shall smile on this who broke the bars
On Love's wide kingdom in a single kiss
And gave me flight above high soaring stars.
O, you so strongly in my spirit move
My joy sings you whenever I write Love.

SPRING AND A LARCH WOOD

Like a bird with flightless wings
I ran with flapping arms outspread,
Singing as a wild bird sings,
Little heeding what I said.

Wind before, sun overhead!

Down a wet ploughed field I bounded,
And the smell of earth was sweet,
All the hills my joy resounded,
And I felt my body swinging
To the rhythm of my singing,
And the rhyming of my feet.

O the joy of being fleet!

O the joy of laughter
And the wind's laugh shouting after!

O the backward push of knee
Spurning ruddy soil behind!
Running riot with the wind!
O the joy of being free
To run
In the sun,
Leaping, crying,
Singing, flying,
Tireless!

O the joy of being me!

Suddenly I was aware
Of silence in the air.
I had stepped
Where the eyes of Beauty slept,
And her hands lay on her breast,
Nervelessly at rest.
Like a child,
Wearied quite of being wild,
She had drowsied from her play

And hid herself away
In the wood.
She had veiled her maidenhood
In green and golden mystery
Past which I dared not see.
I dared not breathe, nor look, nor stir,
I was so hushed in holiness,
I was so strangely close to her
I dared not move to touch her dress.
I was so bound in quietness.
The hoyden wind, abashed like me,
And sunk in piteous surprise,
Crept to her very wistfully
Kissing her golden lidded eyes
With little mournful gusty sighs.
But I could only hang my head,
And stand like any sullen boy,
For lovely Joy had dumbly fled,
And I was fain to follow Joy,
But she was fleet, and she was coy:
Then I was filled with sudden rage

For Beauty's green cool sanctitude!
And like a beast trapped in a cage
Assaulted her sweet solitude
With bellowings rude.

But . . . shudderingly affrighted
Defiant courage dropped away
And left me in dismay,
Woefully benighted,
Daring not to stay.
I had desecrated
Beauty where her angels shine
At her holiest shrine;
Whimpering I hated
All that looked divine.
Peevishly I mumbled,
Sobbing out my little grief,
And like a hunted thief
Knew not where I stumbled,
Groping for relief.

O wonder past belief!

Where my rude feet had gone
Growing by,
A solitary primrose shone,
An opened eye!
Beauty looked at me.
Beauty smiled.
Beauty stared unfrenziedly,
Undefiled.

Then I hid my face,
And crawled away
To a secret sunless place
Peacefully to pray.

MARCH WINDS

Blow, winds, blow!
North, south, east, and west!
Blow, winds, blow!
Give the sluggard world no rest!
Lash the trees to screaming rage!
Whip the seas to hymns of thunder!
Close the lips of withered age!
Mammon's smiling gardens plunder!
Blow, winds, blow!
Out, out! Rave and shout!
Blow, winds, blow
Spirit in and ashes out!
Kindle all the dying fires!
Smite all chains that lie unriven!
Rouse in man a God's desires!
Shake the fixed stars of heaven!

Shatter! Shatter!
Rend and scatter
Feeble faith and false illusion!
Out of death and devastation,
Out of chaos and confusion
There shall spring a new creation!
There shall rise the towers of Truth
From the rebel hand of Youth!
Blow, winds, blow!

BEETHOVEN

Beneath the single lamp's pale glow
She sits enthroned, her fair round head
Held high, her tiny body thrilled
To power, while from her fingers flow
The deathless torrents of the dead
Whose living voice may not be stilled
By death, him who with closed eyes
Listens, his sombre lips tight locked
Upon a song unsung, as one
Deaf to the world, seeking harmonies
Of all the spheres, a spirit rocked
In silence, nourished of the sun,
Beethoven! His are thunder and sleep,
Calvary, and the silver rain
Of peace! He wrung his heart of blood
To pour like manna in the deep
Places where no love or pain

May reach to give the spirit food
Save love and pain like his: for he
So faithfully loved life he gave
His holy spirit shape, and then,
Beneficent, sent it forth to be
A saviour of mankind, to save
All strong and suffering hearts of men.
Weak hearts must faint before his tide,
Which storms their cliffs with little ruth,
But those deep visioned and un-calm,
Who hurl themselves on Time, and ride
His tameless hours to hound down Truth,
May dare his battle, and take his balm.

Born of his spirit, and cast in his mould,
To utter him! She was made for this!
See, her live look of him! Brows bent,
Mouth locked in that grim smiling fold,
Dark deep, ineffable. . . . She is
His image, and his instrument.
She breasts his billows like a gull!

He is her elemental sea
Wherein alone her passions move,
And her clear spirit breathes its full:
Brave, tender, deep, and free,
She is his child, and loves to love,
Which is the word by which we live,
We who go forth to dare and do
For life: clear-eyed and motionless
She sits, her hands outheld to give
Through them the beautiful and true,
As if to smite! As if to bless!

As if to bless, as if to smite!
Lo! from those singing finger tips
Her naked honesty shines out
As an articulate clear light
Of love, while on her tender lips
Is silence! Hear her spirit shout
Her master's word of love! Hear
The everlasting battle cry
Of God! Love! O, lovers all,

Gird up your strength to tilt at fear!
Carry the word to gods who die
Where death and the world hold them in thrall!
The word that is ours to do and sing!
The tree that is ours to root on earth!
The faith that is ours to live and prove!
Come to her hands for the sword and the wing!
Come to her hands for the glad new birth!
Come to her hands for the founts of Love!
Her hands shall smite the coward down,
And her hands shall bless the truth in you,
Though dumb her eyes, and dumb her lip,
She bids you aspire her master's crown,
She bids you to his word be true,
She bids you join their fellowship!
See where he listens with closed eyes
Whereon the mists of death lie dim,
He who knows all of heaven and hell,
Deaf to the world, manblind, godwise,
Smiles like a god, half sweet, half grim,
And says . . . "*my singer, it is well!*"

For Janet Wheeler.

A PRAYER

O LOVE, give me a passionate heart
That my heart may be pure.
Give me, O Love, thy harder part,
The daring to endure.
Lead me not in ways too green
Lest my faith cease to strive,
Keep thou thy sword for ever keen
To stab my soul alive.
O give me thy deep strength to hold
Thy peace within my breast,
All sick and sorrowing hearts to fold
In thy enfolding rest.

ONE MOTHER

MARY!

I'm quite alone in all the world,
Into such bright sharp pain of anguish hurled
I cannot pray wise comfortable things;
Death's plunged me deep in hell, and given me wings
For terrible strange vastnesses; no hand
In all this empty spirit-driven space; I stand
Alone, and whimpering in my soul. I plod
Among wild stars, and hide my face from God.
God frightens me. He's strange. I know Him not.
And all my usual prayers I have forgot:
But you — you had a son — I remember now!
You are not Mary of the virgin brow!
You agonized for Jesus! You went down
Into the ugly depths for him. Your crown

Is my crown! I've seen you in the street,
Begging your way for broken bread and meat:
I've seen you in trams, in shops, among old faces,
Young eyes, brave lips, broad backs, in all the places
Where women work, and weep, in pain, in pride.
Your hands were gnarled that held him when he died!
Not the fair hands that painters give you, white
And slim. You never had such hands: night
And day you laboured, night and day, from child
To woman. You were never soft and mild,
But strong-limbed, patient, brown-skinned from the sun,
Deep-bosomed, brave-eyed, holy, holy One!
I know you now! I seek you, Mary! Spread
Your compassionate skirts! I bring to you my dead!
This was my man. I bore him. I did not know
Then how he crowned me, but I felt it so.
He was my all the world. I loved him best

When he was helpless, clamouring at my breast.
Mothers are made like that. You'll understand
Who held your Jesus helpless in your hand
And loved his impotence. But as he grew
I watched him, always jealously, I knew
Each line of his young body, every tone
Of speech; his pains, his triumphs were my own.
I saw the down come on his cheeks with dread,
And soon I had to reach to hold his head
And stroke his mop of hair. I watched his eyes
When women crossed his ways, and I was wise
For him who had no wisdom. He was young,
And loathed my care, and lashed me with youth's
tongue.
Splendidly merciless, casual of age, his scorn
Was sweet to me of whom his strength was born.
. . . Besides, when he was more than six foot tall
He kept the smile he had when he was small! . . .
And still no woman had him. I was glad
Of that — and then — O God! The world ran
mad!

Almost before I knew, this noise was war;
Death and not women took the son I bore. . . .

You'll know him when you see him: first of all
Because he'll smile that way when he was small;
And then his eyes! They never changed from blue
To duller grey, as other children's do,
But like his childish dreams he kept his eyes
Vivid, and deeply clear, and vision wise.
Seek for him, Mary! Bright among the ghosts
Of other women's sons he'll star those hosts
Of shining boys! (He always topped his class
At school!) Lean forward, Mary, as they pass,
And touch him! When you see his eyes you'll
weep
And think him your own Jesus! Let him sleep
In your deep bosom, Mary, then you'll see
His lashes, how they curl, so childishly
You'll weep again, and rock him on your heart
As I did once, that night we had to part.
He'll come to you all bloody and be-mired,

But let him sleep, my dear, for he'll be tired,
And very shy. If he'd come home to me
I wouldn't ask the neighbours in to tea. . .
He always hated crowds. . . I'd let him be. . .

And then perhaps you'll take him by the hand
And comfort him from fear when he must stand
Before God's dreadful throne; then, will you call
That boy whose bullet made my darling fall,
And take him by the other hand, and say. . .
" *O God, whose Son the hands of men did slay,*
These are Thy children who do take away
The sins of the world. . . ."

TO KENNIE

Have you seen the laughter of grasses
Where wind passes?
Sweeping his wild wings over
Meadows where clover
Nods and bows
And golden honey-bees drowse?

Have you heard how the wild wind hushes
In swaying rushes,
And felt the green world listen
Where waters glisten,
For the key
To their murmured mystery?

Have you seen the delicate lilies,
Where life ever still is,
And holy light glimmers
And the wind shimmers,

Stirring the air
Into one luminous prayer?

Even as wind's laughter
And the hush after,
And the cool breeze blowing,
Whence lilies are growing,
Even so wild
And so white are the thoughts of a child.

FELLOWSHIP

I FOUND a little baby
Playing in the grass,
Flowers are his playmates,
And all the things that pass,
Harebell, and heatherbell,
Singing lark, and silver swallow,
Happy baby loves 'em well,
And his blue eyes follow
Down the road to the corner
Where the white geese are,
Up the sky where the long days die
To the first pale star.

I found a little baby
Playing on the green!
Hi! You poor old doddling man,
Where may you have been?

By youth's pride, and man's delight,
Folly's fire, and wisdom's sorrow:
I go forth to welcome might,
And bid the world good-morrow.
Down the road to the milestone
Where all the journeys end:
A smile for you to take you through,
Poor old friend.

I found a little baby
Playing all day long.
He's a mighty lover
And makes a mighty song!
Big folk, and little folk,
Clouds, and carts, and all the things,
Love, and pigs, and men, and smoke,
He hails 'em all, and sings
Down the road to the round pond
Where the swallows dip,
All of these pass by and please
To make my fellowship!

THE GARDENER

Now I go from thee,
My little tree,
Other hands tend thee,
Hands that banish me.

I made a garden
To cherish thy seed,
Daily I laboured
Thy leaping growth to feed.

From worms and all poison
I tended thy roots,
From blight and black blizzards
Thy green and tender shoots.

I was thy gardener,
My little tree,
From my own garden
These enviers banish me.

How will they nurse thee,
Thou bright flame of Spring?
O, may they not plunder
Thy fruitful blossoming!

Now must I leave thee
To travel my road,
Love for my speeding,
And fear, a heavy load.

But grow thou, my darling,
My little tree,
In thy green summer
I shall come back to thee.

Under thy branches
I'll come to rest.
I was thy gardener,
I'll be thy guest.

LOVE'S GUARD

When first I awake,
Half seeing, half dreaming,
Morning shadows take
Shape and life-seeming.

A little sweet ghost
Calls me, enchants me,
He and his bright host
Of memories haunts me.

His hands seek my face
Like little leaves falling.
There is no quiet place
Where he is not calling.

It is not well with thee,
O my darling!
It is not well with me,
My little darling!

Thou art stolen away,
O my darling!
This is a long long day,
My little darling!

But my love shall hold
O my darling!
Strong thoughts to enfold
My little darling!

Where thou art . . . sleep . . .
O my darling!
Love's guard shall keep
My little darling!

A LULLABY

Sleep, little rose,
Thou flower of my blossoming,
Thy petals close,
Love now encradles thee,
Lights thee and shadows thee,
Bud of my winter, and flower of my spring.

Sleep, little bird,
The world's winds blow bitterly
But sleep thou unstirred,
Love now encradles thee,
Lights thee and shadows thee,
Nest thee, my fledgeling, in Love's faithful tree.

Sleep, little friend,
Thy manhood shall testify
Love hath no end!
Love that encradles thee,
Lights thee and shadows thee,
Weaves thee a banner to bear by-and-by!

A DREAM IN SUBURBIA

As I go out into the sun
To live this first sweet day of Spring
I think how golden life must be
Where young-eyed rabbits peep and run,
And daffodils are growing free,
And mating birds come out to sing.

I think I see a cobbled street
Where blinking cats and children sprawl,
Where cronies gossip at the door,
Old cronies, basking in the heat,
The sunlight shifting on the floor,
And creeping up a bare white wall.

Perhaps a thousand years ago
I vagabonded down that way,
A sunbeam glimmered on my brain
And printed it for ever. So
Each passing year on Spring's first day
My happy dream is born again.

VOICES

I

Make up the fire, my old bones are chill,
And breath's all gone a-climbing Churchyard hill,
I shan't see Spring, friends, something tells me so,
My golden crocuses'll push and blow,
And daffodils, and me not there to see!
And primroses! The yellow Spring! — Let be,
My rotten flesh'll make a patch of sod
For shining flowers! — This toddy's hot, thank God!

II

Why can't war take men like us,
Bag o' bones, and incubus,
Dying heart, and crooked back,
All that's old, and bad, and slack?

Keep your cannon balls and shells
For workhouse beds, and prison cells;
Turn us out into the field,
At point of sword, lest weakness yield,
Till there be left of us not one —
And pray the world be new begun!

III

I'm going out to the noise of the drum,
The delirious beat
Of marching feet
Says . . . Come!
Calls to my blood like love in Spring!
Hear them sing!
Left . . . right . . .
To fight . . . to fight . . .
The Hun!
Praise the Lord!
With a righteous cause and a faithful gun,
And a glittering deadly sword!

Maybe I'll lie in a field of dead
With a dead man's body to pillow my head,
What care I?
Better to die
For the call of the drum
Than sleep in a coward's bed!
I come!

IV

Looks as though men must kill each other,
That's what the past tells. I don't know.
Not all the wisdom of books'll smother
Power-lust and blood-lust. Wisdom's slow,
And blood is quick, and brain takes fire,
And a man is chased by his own desire.

V

Power! There's no lust worse than that lust!
I hate war!
Beauty of ages turned to dust!
What for?

Lest the sword of the strong should rust!
What does it matter to God or me
Who rules the sea?
England or Germany broken and shamed,
Shall the sea be tamed?
Let men in their blindness spend and spill
Money and blood if they will —
But Rheims! O God! O God!
Is there rape more bloody than the rape of a clod?

VI

Hush, you fools, they've killed my boy,
Him that was my promised man!
He went out in pride and joy,
And when he went the war began!

Flesh, and blood, and bone of me,
O God, my lovely darling's dead!
I gave for faith and liberty,
No woman's breast to hold his head!

Him that was so hard to bear,
Him that came a-courting me!
Him so young, and fine, and fair,
Here's an end of the war for me!

VII

Yet out of futile strife
There shall arise
Purged and triumphant life,
Chastened and wise.

Nations shall fall no more
At one man's word,
And offer their sons to War
In the name of the Lord!

Youth shall come into its own
Splendidly free!
Towers over bodies and stone
Democracy!

SPRING WINDS

Lovely lady, come out to play,
For here is spring's sweet holiday!

Leave your weeping, and leave your woe,
Grief may come, and grief may go.

Leave your shoes and your dainty gowns,
To follow me barefoot over the downs.

Loose your riband and toss your hair,
And lay your lovely bosom bare.

A silver swallow is on the wing,
O, how shall you forbear to sing?

The silver clouds are gay and wild,
O how shall you not turn a child?

I'll kiss your neck, and cheek, and chin,
But never a soul shall call it sin.

I'll kiss your lips both free and long
But never a soul shall call it wrong.

Lovely lady, come out to play,
Leave your sorrow and come away!

NIGHT SPEAKS

O MEN, little men, be still!
You with your blood and tears
My peace offend.
Have you gathered no wisdom of years,
Has Time been so feebly your friend
That you may not be strong — and not kill,
Crying 'God!' Think you there is any God hears?
Be still!
It is my holy silence you rend.

Be still! You clamour in vain
When you cry on a God to approve
One cause of blood or another.
There is no God that shall bend
This man's or that man's way.
There is no God has need of your pain.

There is no God for whom you may spend
The sacred blood of your brother.
Know you not God? He is Love!
Him you slay!

Know you not God? Look on high
Where the royal sun's dying flame
Banners the fields of the sky!
Lo! This is He in whose name
You hate, you clamour, you die,
And drag his proud banner in shame!
Know you not God? O, see,
Hanging over,
Where she floats in a shimmer of green,
Like a calm bird of light,
Breasting the deep of the sea,
Venus, first jewel of night!
Passionate and serene
As the downward gaze of a lover
When love like a quenchless torch burns clear in his sight!

This is God! All is one! This is He!
Know you not God? Look low
Where the young green grass waves in the wind,
Laughing mantle of earth,
In whose green secret folds
A myriad little lives
She feeds, where each clod holds
A world whose life she gives!
Earth who bears in her crown
A myriad flowers sweet
For adornment of her mirth!
See how she lays them down
All these, for a carpet under your feet!
Know you not God? Look low,
Him you shall find!

Know you not God? Lo, between
Heaven and earth, flowers and stars
Gleams the last greatest sign that shall prove
Him who is proven in all! Have you seen,
Opened in joy and amaze,

The eyes of two spirits that love,
Locked in the long golden gaze
Which breaks all familiar bars,
Custom, and terror, and shame,
Modesty's gossamer screen,
Dreams and despair, and desire,
Destroying all these in white fire
Making one song to worship His name,
Love! Love! Love!
This is God! All is one! This is He!
Love that unlids the soul's eyes
When passion has burned out all lies
The ultimate vision to see!
Love that releases the breath
Of two spirits divinely to mingle
On lips that are joined in delight,
In a pæan of praise that none single,
None joyless may sing in His sight!
Love, the blithe comrade of Fate!
Love, whose pure passion shall move
From Man's neck the cold burden of hate

Which he bears like a blind slave of Death,
And deliver him — free!
Love, spirit of all life's forms,
Love — their activity!
Pivot of flame whence swing
The choiring moons and suns!
Leaping sap of the tree,
Thunder and flash of storms,
Colour and scent of the rose,
Motion of birds awing,
Tide of the trackless sea,
Law of Earth's little ones,
Ant, and spider, and bee,
Song that all lovers sing,
Pith of all beauty that grows,
These are God! God articulate!
He is Law! He is Love! This is He
Who now is blasphemed with hate!

O you whom earth gathers in,
Going your homeward way,

Whose eyes have beheld these things,
The dying sun, the evening star,
The green fields under the sky,
And lovers, lovers . . . at close of day,
Peace, when all Earth's creatures lie
Under the white spread wings
Of brooding sleep,
Save Man, listen amid my stillness deep
How one drowsed, praiseful blackbird sings,
And judge now, if you may,
How much against the living God you sin
When in His Holy name you cry
War!

For H. de S.

CRUCIFIED

DONG!
Hush, on the wind's breath
Comes limping death,
Out of the depths below,
Solemn and slow.
Dragging its weary note
Where seagulls float,
Venturing wild and fair
On the lulls of the air.

DONG!
Listen how humans die,
And rot, and lie,
Tolled into heaven and hell
By book and bell.
Sinner and saint they lay
In common clay.

Dust unto dust, they sing,
Once more we bring.

DONG!
Here they bring no mouldering dead!
Here no lagging feet may tread!
Only youth may climb so high
Underneath the windy sky!
Here no gentle flowers spring,
Here no larks and linnets sing,
Only here and there a single
Wild blue lupin stars the shingle,
Only seagulls swift and shrill
Scream about the lonely hill.

DONG!
Here, where only youth has trod,
Very near the feet of God,
Here a broken temple stands,
Builded once by rebel hands,
Leaving all the world behind,

Temple of the unfettered wind.
Stark against infinity
It rears defeated dignity,
But of its pride there stands no more
Than the portal of a door!

DONG!

By the door there lies weeping the village Idiot.
They pluck the flower and let it die!
(Vision is a lonely thing.)
They wound the bird and let it lie!
(Thirsting lips most passionate sing.)
And only madness mounts so high!

DONG!

There comes to him a " fallen " woman.
They mark the lamb when it is born.
(Hearken how the Christ-bells ring!)
They sow the tares and eat the corn.
(How carelessly wild lilies spring!)
And daily plait the crown of thorn.

DONG!

Stephen!

Mary!

Are you there, Steve?

Here.

Stephen, I've got it.

Got my whistle?

Yes.

I stole it, Steve; a girl like me can steal
And not be much the worse. I'm glad I did.
But they don't know.

Not yet. I heard them say
You whistled crazy tunes outside the porch
Last Sunday evening when the Word was read,
And children dropped their books to hear you play,
And Annie Dean — whose baby's born last night —
Stood up and sang as though her wits were gone,
And so they took it from you.

So they did.

They stole it. Give it me!

They'll beat us, Stephen.

DONG!

Let them! Let them! Let them! The blasted fools!

Besides, that's nothing new, it's not the first time.

. . . I hate that bell. It's got a silly sound,

Silly and slow, like all their silly eyes,

It bleats and lies like all their silly tongues!

What does it mean? I've heard that sound before.

Death, Steve, it's tolling for my mother.

But she's not dead.

She is.

She is not dead.

Death's not like that. Your mother's dumb, not dead.

Didn't you see her eyes?

They've shut 'em down,

And Isabel put pennies on the lids.

DONG!

That's right. Pennies'll keep 'em down.
She's blind as death, but she's not dead, I know.

She is, cold as a stone, and buried in the mud,
And all the blinds in Sunnyside are down,
And Isabel has trimmed her hat with crape.
They wouldn't let me follow; neighbours say
I broke her heart with shame, but I don't care.
. . . That bell's stopped now. They've finished,
and I'm glad.
I'm glad my mother's dead. I'm wicked, Stephen.

Under the earth, and dumb, and deaf, and blind,
But she's not dead. I've looked at death before;
It's beautiful, except when men kill birds,
And that's not death, that's slaughter.

And I've seen death; I saw my baby die.

Yes, that was death, lovely, and calm, and bright.
She was like a flower, still in the innocent bud.

He was a tramp, and lay beside the road,
Under the careless stars, and casual wind.

I thought she was asleep, but her face shone,
A light was on her lips, she seemed to laugh.

All the old wrinkles lay upon his face
Like letters of old pain . . . and sudden peace. . . .

Her small hands flung out like a little cross.
She would have been a woman. I love death.

And his gnarled fists stretched in the violets
Were clenched and clutched upon eternity.

When she was born they labelled her with sin,
And clacked their tongues on "bastard"; when she died
They buried her where bastards lie, in silence.

They cursed him when he begged for their dry
bread,
But there is peace in death. They let him lie.
The stars had seen him sleeping there before
And were not moved: they were indifferent now.

Her eyes soon learnt the cruelty of living,
She smiled at that, and shut her eyes, and went.

He only pitied them; they never knew
The pride and glory of his goalless way.

They knew, that old man, and my little child.

Old age and infancy are loveliest in death.
Sin has not smutted one, and from the other
Sorrow has washed the tears of old mistakes.
Death was her right, life would have taken
toll. . . .
Perhaps I should have left her. . . .

Left her, Stephen?
What do you mean? How strange your eyes are,
Stephen!
I never would believe that you were mad,
But now you look so wild and your lips move,
Mumbling and mouthing — Stephen!

I am mad.
But not so mad as they! They put red roses
In a butcher's shop. Crimson in crimson
flesh. . . .

O never mad to me! Dear Stephen, look!
Here I am, Mary! And you love me so!

There you are, Mary, and I love you so,
I love you so, I love you, love you so. . . .

Guy, guy guy,
Stick him in the eye,
Put him up the chimney,
And there let him die.

They stuck him on a tree,
And they pierced his hands and feet,
Sing holy, holy, holy,
Broken bread and meat!

Stephen!

Sing holy, holy, holy . . .
And there let him die . . .
Put him up the chimney,
And there let him die. . . .

Do not sing! Be gentle, Stephen.

O Mary, deaf, and dumb, and blind, you say!
Under the ground, with pennies on her eyes!
I'm sitting on her grave, and she's not dead!
. . . But she was plaiting up the crown of thorn. . . .
'Twas she screamed . . . crucify! O crucify!
. . . Mary, I love you, love you.

Kiss me now.

. . . . . .

But see these flowers shining out of dung . . .
Stephen, no man has kissed me *so* before.
That other kissed you.

Yes, but never *so*.

You love me.

Yes.

The village lunatic!

The whore!

And *this* between us, Mary! Is this sin,
And lunacy?

Yes, *they* would call it so.

O Mary, you and I! The most despised!
In all our lives men's hearts have felt for us
Laughter,

Or lust,

Or pity, never love.

Yet now when I look deep in your clear eyes
I find no sin, nor anything but love,

And when I look like this I find love too,
Not madness, Stephen, only clearest love.

I have not seen this thing in their dull eyes,
I saw two lovers once, but they were cows
Munching a vacant self-complacency.
Their silly hands were clasped, and in their hands,
Nothing! Their speechless silly lips were joined,
And on their lips was nothing, nothing, nothing:
They know no love, or death, those silly sane ones. . . .

Hush, Stephen, all the depths are muddied now.

You know they torture birds to make them sing,
That's strange, for when he sings they will not listen.

O Stephen, all the sorrows on your face!

O Mary, all the bitterness on yours!

Do you remember when we went to school?

O yes, they called us good-for-nothings then.

I was the dunce, and you were wild and strange,
And played the truant every other day.

I hated them droning their morning hymns,
And twice-times table, and their doh-re-mi!
Their shiny faces each like all the rest,
Their tuneless tongues, and vacant, sightless eyes,
Dull to all beauty, lighting up on pain,
Exulting joyously in passionless cruelty.
When I was birched . . . I remember all those
eyes . . .
Glutting their soulless senses on my tears!
I always cried when I was tortured, Mary:
It happened often, for they thrilled to torture,
And I was fair game for their little lust.
. . . I hated their white collars and their boots!

They called me slut because I wore no boots.

They broke my skin for lack of catechism.

They would not let me play with Evie Smith
Because my father drank, and she was proud.

I never had a father or a mother,
Only an aunt who turned me out of doors
From dawn to sunset with a crust of bread.

Better that, Stephen, than a prisoner's home.

O how I hate them, hate them, hate them, hate them!

O Stephen, do not teach me hate! I try
To pity them, as God forgives my sins.
But bitterness comes easy to my soul.

'As God forgives your sins! There is no God.

There is! There is! O do not take God from me!

Or if there is we must forgive His hate.
O Mary, who are you to prove your God!

Guy, guy, guy,
Give her wings to fly,
Break her wings and choke her song,
Hang her scaffold high!
Sing holy, holy, holy!
And then let her die. . . .

O I have seen you hunted down the years!
I saw the marks between your unconscious eyes!
Marked like the deer they fatten and then kill,
Marked like the lambs they rear, and shear, and butcher,
Marked like a pigeon ringed for private slaughter!
O Mary, marked like me for crucifixion!

God joined us two in handcuffs from the first.
Linked in our loneliness with Him and isolate things.

Like moons that turn men mad, and fix 'em moon-
struck,
And notes I fetch out from a penny whistle
That sound like lonely stars, and children's tears.
. . . O child, I've seen you shoved, and shamed,
and sucked,
I've seen your lips close up on bitterness,
And hang apart in vain for food and drink,
There's passion in pity, Mary, steel in love . . .

O Stephen, I have been unhappy, Stephen!

There's hate that puts out stars. . . . I killed
her, Mary.

Killed her! You killed her, Stephen!

Yes, I did.
I heard you crying, like a singing bird
Wounded and scolded by a gibbering cat,
Moaning its voiceless pain and impotence.

Then I came nearer, so that I might see
What new device for torture she had found.
I saw her face, ghastly with its mean fury
Glooming above you like a serpent's head
Wagging from side to side before it strikes.
I saw her teeth. I remember how they shone,
I thought how white teeth can be beautiful.
And then I saw you, with your eyes turned up
And drawn in fascination on her eyes.
Your hands hung down, your neck gleamed dim
and soft,
(You wore a black dress I had seen you sew
While she was safe away at prayer-meetings,
Praying for all lost souls like you and me!)
Your lips half smiled, and trembled, as if to meet
Her sword with your own lilies, and your tears
Starred on your cheeks, and fell upon your neck.
And I was still, because your little breasts
Curved where the dress was tight, so delicately
That all my soul cried out on sweet . . . sweet
. . . sweet. . . .

O all the sins of all the world were blank,
Looking on you, and all my tumults ceased,
And all my thoughts were white, as you were white. . . .
But slowly, penetrating that round dream,
That sudden world of light in which we stood,
She pressed, her passion stabbed, articulate. . . .
She said . . . you drew men's eyes, and welcomed them,
And held your sin as honey for their luring!
And then . . . O Christ . . . I saw her clench her hand
And strike your gentle breasts three times for shame,
I saw her spit on your eyes . . . and that was all.
I saw no more. My eyes were full of blood.

And so you killed her! My compassionate Stephen.

Hush! No, she is not dead, her eyes
Stabbed you with hate, and so I blinded them,
Her lips had spat on you; I made them dumb.
Her hands had shamed your breasts; I laid them
still.
She is not dead, for death is beautiful.

How did you do it, Steve? They said her heart
Stopped suddenly in her sleep, and that was all.

I did not mean to kill; I looked at her —
The devil always hated staring eyes.
I had no fixed intent. It happened so.
On Friday night I ran wild in the woods,
Careless as innocence, and swift as joy,
Playing on my tin whistle, singing too,
And all my songs were little songs of love,
I did not hate her, for I love you so;
I had forgotten all I must forget
Of lust, and hatred, and humanity.

But wandering aimlessly I chanced to stumble
Against your garden fence: I vaulted it,
And crawled to where I knew she slept, and waited.
Presently I drew closer, and I looked,
And by the moon's light saw her lying there
With wide fixed eyeballs, muttering silly prayers.
I pressed my face against the window-pane
(I remember how the cold glass made me shiver)
Lifted the catch, and wormed my body in.
She saw me then; her mouth fell stupidly,
Round as an O, and showed me all her throat
Inside, stringy, and soft, and maddeningly red.
I fixed her gaze with mine as I came near.
The moon was on me. I was white as snow.
She did not scream or lift her hands against me,
But lay quiet, staring, drawing in her breath
In little frightened gasps and rattled sobs.
She did not know me for the idiot Stephen,
But saw me some wild angel come in wrath,
And muttered . . . "Mary, save me from your
Christ,

He is too young, and youth is pitiless . . .
I did not plait your crown, young Jesus Christ . . ."
And then, because she lied, and was afraid,
— But most because her mouth and eyes were silly —
I pressed her throat until her stare went blind,
And closed her gaping lips, and went away.
. . . But O, her teeth were white! I should have left her!
She was not old! I robbed her soul of death!
She cannot see, and so she may not sorrow!
And yet . . . your small bruised breasts . . . remember that . . .

Stephen, I think she died of fear before
You touched her. There was no mark upon her throat.

Pennies and fear! Fearing and pence! O yes . . .

But Mary, wriggling underneath my grasp,
— Like a dying fish her throat was — her bony hands
Crossed on her withered heart, and all the room
Was filled with terrible music . . . lullabies . . .
And terrible small fingers brushed my face. . . .

Sleep . . . sleep . . .
I'll not scold
If you weep,
Bone of my bone . . .
Sleep. . . bright and mild,
Blood of my woman's years . . .
Weep while you can,
You shall be mistress and mother of man. . . .
You shall be old,
And bitter cold,
You shall be turned to stone,
And empty of tears,
My woman child . . .

O God, that motherhood can turn so bitter!
Stephen, my mother's dead, and I am glad.

She is not dead. She will not let us be.
Hush, can you hear the silence?

I hear the sea.

That's all their voices, laughing, whining, screaming,
Surging about the valleys of this hill;
Out of the shadows all their hands are clutching,
Clutching at you and me . . .

We are too high!

Guy, guy, guy!
There let 'em die!
Holy! holy! holy!
CRUCIFY!

Hush, do you hear them, Mary? *Crucify!*

Stephen, come close, ah closer! let us love each other!

Death is triumphant! only living's shame!
Death is not hard, and living is not life!

O let us love, and leave the rest behind!

Death must be easy after love, my sweet.

They crucified us! God will let us live!
He loves his crucified . . . O, kiss me, Stephen.

We are too high, O hands, and tongues, and eyes!

Their sidelong looks can never reach me here.

They may not reach us now. We are too wise!

Only the little opening of a door,
And passing out of living into life!
Only to spread our human flightless wings . . .
. . . The cliffs that sheer into the waiting sea . . .
Then we may flap new tameless wings on Time
Into eternal freedom!

Seagulls! seagulls!
Those sorrowful proud birds! — I'm ready, Stephen.
We may have done with hate and bitterness,
For we are on the heights with love and death.

When we can laugh at life and smile at death
We have climbed higher than the crucifiers!

Our bodies shall lie deeper than their scorn!

Our spirits shall mount higher than their vision!

. . . . . .

SONGS TO SAVE A SOUL

By IRENE RUTHERFORD MCLEOD

American comment

"One is exhilarated by a fine and lofty passion for freedom, a strong and beautiful spirit of love, made glowingly alive and impulsive by youth. Even these qualities would hardly render the full effect of the natural powers they possess, if a clumsy and halting expression, stammering metres and rhymes, choked and deflected the articulate clearness of communication. Miss McLeod is surprisingly gifted for one so young, with a simple but effective technique. Her metres are mostly always simple, the marvel of them being a lucidity of melody that is haunting. Her common words are always full of brightness, like a 'host in the sunshine' of Wordsworth's daisies. They dance, they ripple, they wave on the winds of her rhythm.

. . . Miss McLeod's perfection is in her immaturity, and I cast no reflections with the statement. She's alive, vibrant, eager, curious, impulsive, intense, not with wisdom, but life, which is the better part of wisdom. . . . It is a glad little volume, because it is courageous, bold, free, the heart of youth setting sail upon the dreams of life."

WILLIAM STANLEY BRAITHWAITE in
Boston Transcript.

"But Miss McLeod's great claim to distinction lies in the keen, unaffected joy she has in pursuing the desire of her young eyes. Many an old poet has sung the ecstasy of youth, many a young poet the sadness and vain questionings of it. For the health which goes with the ecstasy is rarely articulate till the ecstasy is past — the morbidity accompanying it only too frequently so. So to find a poet who is young and glad, and beautifully vocal, all at once, gives us a delight in her scarcely

less than her own in the world she celebrates. Miss McLeod sees magic even in a London fog. . . . If Miss McLeod should never write another line, she would live as the author of 'Songs to Save a Soul,' a book that is the very Credo of ardent and idealistic youth."

—*New York Times.*

"Now and again there turns up for review something which ought to be quoted entire instead of overlaid with a crust of inadequate critical phrases, many times used. Such a thing is 'Songs to Save a Soul,' which has compressed in its less than a hundred pages all the revolt of passionate youth against the stale, the mean and the outworn — the fond, the smug and the *blasé* — the conventional, the fettered, the cynical and the bitterly painful which life forces on its thin-skinned victims. . . Instinct with keen ringing challenge to life, she sings her 'Songs to Save a Soul' in eloquent living lyric. Some one once said that

'prose is heard, poetry *overheard*,' and if ever it had meaning it has in these spontaneous song-children of this fiery-hearted youngster."

HOWARD DEVREE in *Kansas City Star.*

"But there are other signs which nourish the hope of good from the ferment of reckless energy in the veins of this fire-girt and man-weaponed, if not man-sinewed, young Brunhild of our day. There is a combination of impact and velocity which is auspicious; there is a capacity for style with preference for substance; there are self-curbings between the self-loosings or self-lashings; there are traces of design emergent through the nebulosities of adolescence like a planet's broken disk through its envelope of vapor. On the question whether this early power is climatic or merely seasonal, whether, in plain words, it means personality or youth, whether it can outlast the sharp tests of the advent of maturity and the translation into actualities, the sole authority is time."

O. W. FIRKINS in *The Nation.*

SONGS TO SAVE A SOUL

By IRENE RUTHERFORD MCLEOD

British comment

"Another new voice, another brave and beautiful spirit, young and capable of the poet's insight and expression." —*London Daily News.*

"The charm of spontaneity. More than once the true lyrical ring is attained, and with it inner clearness, strength, and coherence." —*Athenæum.*

"Here is an authentic singer. Her poems have their own rhythm and freshness, and a depth of sincere feeling that is rare." —*Observer*

"Intensely felt and often aptly expressed. All the pieces, even the love-songs, have a true individuality." —*London Times.*

"Bears the mark of unmistakable, authentic poetry. Something springing from the very heart of experience." —*Land and Water.*

"Her poetry certainly contains and conveys a message. We have the refreshing sense of meeting in it a singer who speaks truths."

—*Manchester Guardian.*

SONGS TO SAVE A SOUL

British comment — continued

"Very seldom is she traditional or perfunctory. She has no manner to keep up. She has the fresh outlook, keen feeling, and sincere expression, the 'innocent' eye and voice, of the lyrist, the poet unspoiled: whose perceptions are unblurred, spirit unjaded, and words undictated. Her modernity is unenervated by weariness, though she can express the weary moods when they come. Her pain and joy are vivid and absorbing: there is no 'dull narcotic exercise' in her versemaking; even when she sings of hopeless and premature sorrow overtaking a radiant love. She has the zest of town and field, can love crowds and solitude, and rejoice in the beauty of the body. She can abandon herself utterly to love's passion, or carol its peace in perfect simplicity, each in its turn with all her heart. . . ."

J. A. DALE in *Ottawa Citizen.*

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